

**SUMMARY OF THE
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 15, 1998**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Tuesday, December 15, 1998, at 11 a.m. by teleconference. The meeting was led by its chair, Dr. Charles Brokopp. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues on the prepared agenda.*

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Brokopp opened the meeting with a roll-call of committee members and a review of the proposed agenda. While considerable discussion was had regarding all major issues in the summary, only a few editorial changes were deemed necessary and the summary of the December 1, 1998 meeting was accepted by the committee. Dr. Brokopp reviewed the progress on the action items from the previous meeting.

APPROVAL OF ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES

Ms. Betsy Dutrow, NELAC Executive Secretary, reviewed the progress that the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) is making in the processing of candidate accrediting authorities. She noted that the current progress ranges from States responding to deficiencies noted in completed on-site assessments to States having not yet responded to deficiencies noted in their initial applications. Technical reviews by NELAP staff are in various stages of completion, while on-site assessments have been completed in some States and are being scheduled for January for others. The committee acknowledged that the current March 1999 deadline will be difficult for some States to meet in order to be included in the first-announced group of NELAC accrediting authorities in the first quarter of 1999. Still, NELAP staff estimates that at least 12 States are likely to complete all requirements to be included. The committee suggested that Mrs. Jeanne Mourrain contact both States with incomplete applications and EPA Regional Offices to assess the likelihood of each completing all required tasks by the March deadline.

TIMELINES FOR APPROVAL OF ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES AND ACCREDITATION OF LABORATORIES

The following time lines for the approval of accrediting authorities and the accreditation of laboratories was suggested by Jerry Parr:

March 1999 (tentative)	First accrediting authorities approved
April 1999 - June 1999	Laboratory applications in first round to be processed
June 1999 - March 2000	Accrediting authorities review first round applications and perform one-half of the on-sites

April 2000	First round of laboratories approved and announced, including those with interim accreditation
April 2000 - March 2001	Remainder of on-sites completed for first round

While Mr. Parr's original proposed time lines contained more concise dates for certain items, the committee agreed that time lines as specified above were more appropriate.

QUESTIONS FOR ROUNDTABLE AT NELAC IVi

The logistics and timing issues of implementation of the NELAC standards by accrediting authorities and laboratories are present concerns, and are expected to continue indefinitely. As written, the standards are implicitly effective on adoption by the Conference. However, the time required for accrediting authorities and laboratories to adopt and implement the standards will vary depending on the legislative and regulatory processes and the significance of the changes to the standards adopted by the Conference.

The issues of reciprocity, the timing of laboratory accreditation during the standard 2-year cycle for on-site assessments, the capacity of accrediting authorities for timely assessments, and the provision in the standards for limited interim accreditation (section 4.5.1) were discussed. Ms. Dutrow noted that current NELAP practice is to assess candidate accrediting authorities under the standards in effect at the time of their application (i.e., July 1997). However, requests for assessments for conformity to the current (July 1998) standards, in their entirety, will be honored.

Possible solutions discussed included clarifications in the standards and stated effective dates for each revision. It was noted that other organizations have successfully addressed this issue: Ms. Dutrow has reported her findings on how the National Conference on Weights and Measures handles this issue to Ms. Carol Batterton, and Mr. Parr did likewise regarding the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) policies and practices.

The committee agreed that answers already exist for many of the questions proposed by various parties for discussion in the roundtables and that those answers, along with the findings from Ms. Dutrow and Mr. Parr, should be made available to NELAC IVi attendees by way of a handout. Dr. Brokopp asked each committee member to submit a list of prioritized relevant questions to Ms. Batterton for her assimilation and eventual preparation of the handout.

Tentative agendas have been set for the two scheduled NELAC IVi roundtables. Roundtable 1 will be convened by Ms. Mourrain prior to the Opening Plenary Session on Monday, January 11, 1999 and will involve dialogue among NELAP staff, lead assessors, and the 17 States applying for accrediting authority recognition in March 1999. "Lessons learned" will be an important theme, and at least two States have offered access to their final written reports. Ms. Mourrain will report on the Roundtable 1 discussions immediately afterwards in the Opening Plenary Session. Roundtable 2 will be held Thursday, January 14 following the Environmental Laboratory Advisory Board (ELAB) meeting, and will provide an opportunity for all States to enter into discussions that will better enable them to understand and respond to general and specific NELAP

requirements. Dr. Brokopp will review submitted questions to determine which merit roundtable discussion and will relay those questions to Ms. Mourrain.

INPUTS FROM STATES AND LABORATORIES

Dr. Brokopp led a discussion on issues related to a draft questionnaire previously distributed to committee members for examination. Specific questions and the usefulness of possible responses were discussed, and some additional refinement was agreed upon. The questionnaire consists of three sections: questions for the 17 States currently seeking March 1999 NELAC recognition as accrediting authorities, questions for all other States, and questions for laboratories. Dr. Brokopp will distribute the first section, which includes new questions about numbers of assessors, to the 17 States and request input to him before NELAC IVi. Dr. Brokopp will send section 2 questions to all other States. He received an offer of assistance from Mr. Parr to capture the required State input in a timely fashion. Considerable discussion of the questions proposed for distribution to laboratories ensued, and it was agreed that the distribution would be broadened to include laboratories in all States instead of just States not in the group seeking March 1999 recognition. In light of this decision, some restructuring of the questions will be required of Dr. Brokopp before submittal to Mr. Parr, who will be responsible for distribution to the laboratories. Mr. Parr will enroll the aid of certain laboratory accreditation groups and make use of the EPA-Cincinnati Water Supply (WS)/Water Pollution (WP) series mailing list to contact the laboratories. Questionnaire responses will be sorted at a later date by which of the two groups of States in which the laboratory resides.

POLICY ON EFFECTIVE DATE OF NEW STANDARDS

Dr. Kenneth Jackson acknowledged Ms. Batterton's efforts in modifying the policy to accurately capture the essence sought by the Transition Committee, and asked that the document be made available to the NELAC Board of Directors and committee chairs for consideration and review. There was discussion as to whether this policy should be recommended to the Board of Directors for inclusion in Chapter 1 of the NELAC standards (with adoption as a policy on a temporary basis) or simply remain a policy. Discussion was also heard regarding effective date versus dates for adoption/implementation, and on the two-year transition period as currently described in Chapter 6 of the standards. Dr. Batterton will make additional changes to the policy wording and forward to Ms. Mourrain.

AGENDA FOR NELAC IVi TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING

Dr. Brokopp asked committee members to forward to him any relevant items not already included on the agenda for the Tuesday, January 12, 1999 meeting of the Transition Committee at NELAC IVi in Bethesda, MD.

NEXT MEETING

This was the last scheduled meeting prior to NELAC IVi.

**ACTION ITEMS
TRANSITION COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 15, 1998**

Item No.	Action Item	Date Completed
1.	Ms. Mourrain to contact EPA Regional Offices and States not having completed the application process, in order to assess the ability of all parties to complete required first quarter 1999 tasks.	
2.	Each committee member to submit to Ms. Batterton a list of prioritized questions whose answers are already known and that can be incorporated into a NELAC IVi attendee handout.	
3.	Dr. Brokopp to develop a list of questions/topics that merit discussion in the NELAC IVi roundtables and submit to Ms. Mourrain.	
4.	Dr. Brokopp to distribute Section 1 of the questionnaire to the 17 States seeking March 1999 NELAP recognition as accrediting authorities.	
5.	Dr. Brokopp to distribute Section 2 of the questionnaire to all States not in the group seeking March 1999 NELAP recognition.	
6.	Dr. Brokopp to edit Section 3 of the questionnaire before forwarding to Mr. Parr for his distribution to laboratories in all States.	
7.	Ms. Batterton to further edit the policy on effective date of new standards and forward to Ms. Mourrain	
8.	Committee members to forward to Dr. Brokopp any additional items for inclusion on the agenda for the Transition Committee meeting on January 12, 1999 in Bethesda, MD.	

**PARTICIPANTS
TRANSITION COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 15, 1998**

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